3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

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CHAPTER VI

TRIBAL POLITY

The expression 'polity' amongst Santals may sound paradoxical enough, but we can perhaps observe without fear of contradiction that as one studies the elements of Santal tribal government, one must wonder if one is not face to face with the essence of democracy and about to discover here a government of the people, for the people, by the people. This feature of the Santal impressed a recent Deputy Commissioner[1] of the Santal Parganas so much that he re-shuffled the Santal assemblies to suit modern conditions for a better and a more natural administration of justice and government. This reversion to the good old days was not, what might be called a success; the reasons were various: but all of them when analysed will lead to one conclusion only, the want of education and again the want of education, and not perhaps to any inherent defect of the constitution of the tribal assemblies.

We propose to examine in this chapter the mechanism of the Santal system of tribal govern-

1. Mr. Hoernle, I. C. S., Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas (1927-32).

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

121 62 64 ment and the customary laws that regulate the society to illustrate our observations.

The Limbs of Law

622 (1) In villages

(i) Headman:—

The social authority in the Santal villages is exercised ordinarily by the headman, called Mañjhi, with a batch of village officials to assist him. In [651] Mayurbhanj, he is generally called the Pròdhan, an office belonging to the rural revenue-collector, who need not always be the headman (Mañjhi) Accor- [427] ding to custom he is also the *Ijardar* under a land-holder. His function is to collect rents and to [423] allot land amongst the tenants. His office is not [585] altogether honorary, for he holds free of rent parcels of *màn*[1] land and receives a fee of Re. 1 at each Santal marriage, presenting in turn a pot of rice-beer.

624 (ii) *Paranik*:—He is the assistant headman [423] also enjoying the privilege of rent-free land and having under him a third official, *Jòg-Paranik*.

(iii) *Jòg-Mañjhi*:—This interesting office belongs to a Santal for arranging tribal feasts and carousals of rice-beer, when he acts as a censor of village morals, and is called upon to exercise his

1. Land held by village officials rent-free.